

Registry Report

a bimonthly e-newsletter

stoicus communitas

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May/June 2007

Issue One

Published and edited by
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CONTENTS:

- Introduction
- Announcements
- Featured Interview
- The Porch

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INTRODUCTION

First, let me thank each of you for answering the e-mail correspondence necessary to get to this point in the creation of a community e-newsletter. No one has stepped forward to accept responsibility for actually doing the work, so it looks like I'm it. However, there is good news. There's only going to be half as much of it. I'm not convinced we as a community want or need monthly contact, which makes a bimonthly report a more reasonable effort.

I do wish to thank Giulia Harding of Liverpool, Rob Falla of Cambridge, and Steven Leysen of Belgium for their early and excellent suggestions. Giulia, formerly a BBC radio journalist, has challenged many of my assumptions, which has helped me considerably on the basic concept of this newsletter.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Only one announcement this issue. Dr. William O. Stephens, Professor of Philosophy at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, has a book on Epictetus, coming out in July. Hopefully, the next issue will have more information available. For now, perhaps it's enough to

mention that Dr. Stephens is a renowned authority on one of our favorite Stoics, and I for one look forward to this addition to the Stoic library.



FEATURED INTERVIEW

In each newsletter, it is my intent to include one or more interviews with current members of the Stoic community. Not having time to properly arrange an interview for this first issue, I thought it may be appropriate to start with a brief introduction to myself. When it's your turn for a thumbnail autobiography, perhaps the one that follows may be useful as a model.

Erik Wiegardt

I was born 15 APR 45 in Walla Walla, Washington, USA, and lived most of my life on the Pacific Rim. Education in my formative years was in Protestant parochial schools in rural towns in Oregon and California. Higher education included Portland State University, where I received Bachelor's Degrees in Arts & Letters and Social Science; the Oregon Military Academy, where I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry; and, the University of Oregon, where I received a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Sculpture. My thesis was in Sound Sculpture.

I have worked in many occupations, too many perhaps, and I won't bore you with the entire list, just the more prominent of the lot. I worked as a laboratory analyst for the US Army and for North American Aviation where I performed quality control studies on the escape rocket module of the Apollo Moon Rockets. I am a Vietnam Era War veteran and received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for my participation in Operation White Coat, a biological warfare unit. Other employment includes mortician's assistant, insurance executive, restaurant waiter, English teacher in Japan, display designer for Macy's and Nordstrom, advertising copy writer, and Senior Probation Officer in the Hall of Justice, County of San Diego, California.

Thanks to reasonable returns on various investments, I am currently removed from remunerative employment in the marketplace and spend my days reading, writing, and working in my garden. My e-mail address is cyberstoic@aol.com and I welcome e-mail and visitors to my fair city, San Diego. I've been a Stoic for more than 40 years.



THE PORCH

It seems to me that every Stoic newsletter should have at least a brief essay or discussion of the real reason we are together: the Stoa Poikile, the painted porch of Athens. What follows is a bit of work I did recently to satisfy an old problem I have always had when someone asked, "What do you mean you're a Stoic? What's a Stoic?" That's almost as bad as being asked to tell someone your life story in three minutes or less. I say three minutes or less, because people who ask that question rarely want to know more than you can squeeze into a few sentences.



Four Axioms of the Stoa

(A.K.A. The Four Cardinal Beliefs)

I. Primal Force

The first inner force of all living things, plants and animals, is to survive. This is Nature's **primary directive**. To facilitate this directive, Nature created all living things, plants and animals, so that the dearest thing to each is its own self. This is Nature's **primary orientation** (Chrysippus). Throughout life, each living thing bases every action on what it instinctively or cognitively believes is in its best interest.

II. Creations of Nature

There are four aspects of human existence as creations of nature (Panaetius):

1. **Human:** We are both social and reasoning animals.
2. **Individual:** We have unique physical and personality qualities.
3. **Culture:** We are born into a given culture and family in that culture.
4. **Position:** We find our place in the world according to:
 - a. individual qualities,
 - b. family status,
 - c. fate,
 - d. choices of the will

Of these, only choices of the will are controllable by us.

III. The Highest Good

The highest good is that which is always good. Only virtue as encompassed by **wisdom** qualifies as the highest good, because it is good in sickness and health, poverty and wealth, and in every other condition of human existence (Stoic doctrine). Pleasure, power, and wealth cannot qualify as the highest good, because their exercise can result in unpleasantness, both for the self and for others.

IV. Excellence

Nature gave us one power: the power of **volition** in rightly judging and acting upon our impressions. This power is internal and cannot be taken from us; all else is external and can be taken away (Epictetus). Choices made by the will among the impressions received in the mind achieve excellence when choosing only that which is always in our best interest. That which is always in our best interest is that which is always good, the highest good. Excellent choice is a uniquely human art, the art of living, which leads to our greatest and only true possession, a noble character.

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Thank you for reading,
Erik